



HARI TEMPLE, AN EMBODIMENT OF MATUA UNITY: A CASE STUDY OF KANCHAN NAGAR, PURBA BARDHAMAN.

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ABSTRACT

After the partition of India in 1947, the refugees from East Bengal who came to different district of West Bengal. The large number of East Bengalis who were subsequently forced to migrate was mostly 90% of the lower caste Namashudra community. The lower caste refugee Hindu communities follow with major importance is the Matua religion. universal temples of these Matua's were established in various slum areas of Burdwan city. A universal temple of Hari Chand Thakur builds in Kanchan Nagar. The committees of this temple tried to conduct their activities under the control of this organization by getting approval from the secretary of All India Matua Sangh of Thakur Nagar. The annual religious program of this temple is held on Tritiya, five days after the event of Tagore Nagar. Our temple program is going on for three days. Apart from this area, more than 30 Matua groups from different areas participate in the program. They are given food and travel expenses by the temple. Also, every year on the 10th day of the month of Paush, the foundation day of the temple, Janmashtami, first Wednesday of the month of Agrayon in Bengali Calendar. The presence of this Hari Chand Tagore in the form of the devotional Tagore of the lower castes can be seen very deeply. Although they remembered another thakur with respect. With the combined efforts of many of us, the Universal Matua Mandir was established in Kanchan Nagar in 2010. We built this temple by pooling donations among ourselves. The work of the temple is not yet complete. In 2017, we, on behalf of the committee of this temple, applied to the secretary of Sara Bharat Matua Sangh for permission to open a branch of Sara Bharat Matua Sangh. The presence of this Hari Chand Tagore in the form of the devotional Tagore of the lower castes can be seen very deeply. Although they remembered another thakur with respect.

KEYWORDS: Partition, Matua , Refugee, Colony , Matua Mahasanga, Madhukrisna, Temple, Nama Sudra, Community, Gosai

INTRODUCTION

After the partition of India in 1947, the refugees from East Bengal who came to different district of West Bengal. The large number of East Bengalis who were subsequently forced to migrate was mostly 90% of the lower caste Namashudra community. A large number of these people were in adverse circumstances when they were given a choice between two things, either to leave their religion or to leave their country, they are chosen Second option. The lower caste refugee Hindu communities follow with major importance is the Matua religion. "Matua is a special sect of Sanatan Hinduism. Hari Chand Thakur, a resident of Orakandi in Gopalganj district of Bangladesh, introduced a simple sadhana system called Matua doctrine to speed up the process of God-sadhana, and the followers of this doctrine are called Matua. If Brahminism is the religion of the urban elite, Matua is the religion of the illiterate common man in the village. Matua religion originated in the 19th century, but it developed in the 20th century and established the existence and rights of the Matua's with literary culture and religious resources. The word Matua means to drink or to be drunk. The one who drinks or becomes drunk in the name of Hari is Matua. On the other hand, Matua is interpreted as the meaning of religion which is like that Matua i.e. faith in God."¹

Matua Mahasangha was formed in various districts of West Bengal for the promotion and spread of Matua religion. Even

branches of this association were established in other states of India. A study shows that - "in the 1990s, branches of the Matua Mahasangha were formed in Burdwan district as well as in various districts of West Bengal. In 24 Parganas, 62 branches of 163 rivers, 35 in Burdwan and 36 in Medinipur have been formed. The then central committee member Kalipada Saha Youth Secretary Virat Bairagya Subas Bala Birendranath Biswas played a significant role in propagating the Matua Dharma in the branch associations of Burdwan's Hiragachi Palli Shaktigarh Memari Navagram Panagar Kalna etc. In 1992, its number was 35 in Burdwan district. This reached 89 in 1997."² Most of the refugees who came from East Bengal in Purba Bardhaman district for a long time, about eighty percent of the people were Matua religion. So, after moving to this country, keeping their religious practices. For this reason, universal temples of these Matua's were established in various slum areas of Burdwan city. These temples enshrine the idols of Thakur Hari Chand and his wife Shanti Mata Devi and are worshiped as deities by the devotees following Matua. A universal temple of Hari Chand Thakur builds in Kanchan Nagar, near Burdwan town. "The committees of this temple tried to conduct their activities under the control of this organization by getting approval from the secretary of All India Matua Sangh of Thakur Nagar. Name and designation of committee member's is -1) Haridas Kirtaniya - Dalopoti, 2) Boloram Hawladar - President, 3) Srikanta Halder- Vice- President, 4) Sudhansu Mistry- Secretary, 5) Mantu Sk - Asst. Secretary, 6) Niranjan Mistry - Treasurer and

16th Members.”³ Not only temple management committees or groups, but many such Matua’s groups were formed around these temples. This team consisted of 30 to 40 members, who had their own Dunka - Nishan. These groups used to appear with their groups in various Matua areas of the state including the district, organized by public or private initiative, and there they would play Dunka and chant the path shown and directed by Hari Chand Thakur. Those events lasted for one day, two days or in many cases three days. To perform this event, the teams would only be given travel expenses and food; they would go ahead with the event. However, in some cases, a nominal fee was paid for participating in personal programmed. Not only conducting programmed in different areas but also in the annual event organized in Thakur Nagar every year on Madhu Krishna Tithi’s Thrayodashi, the leaders of these parties from different areas appeared with their party members and participated in various programs at different levels. There are passports in the name of some party leaders in this district, through which a certain number of people were granted visas to visit Bangladesh every year. With that visa every year Dalpati with his people attends the annual event in Orakandi, Bangladesh. An annual Program is also organized at Matua universal Mandir in Purba Bardhaman district. In this regard, Burdwan District Expert Historian Prof. Dr. Sarvajit Yash in his book ‘Social History of Different Religious Communities of Burdwan City’ written based on the religion of Burdwan City mentioned - ‘Many followers of Hari Chand Tagore in Burdwan City are in Nilpur, Sealdanga, Shantipalli, and Kanchan Nagar etc. areas of Burdwan City. There are about eight thousand people of this community in Burdwan city. The people of this community are known as Matua. Their annual event is held in Thakur Nagar. Usually, they play songs like bawl, kirtan etc. Hari Chand community has a temple at Kanchan Nagar in Burdwan city. They have a branch organization in the eastern part of Burdwan district with daily services. The president of this organization is Ramani Mohan Halder (Kanchannagar) and the secretary of this organization Satyaranjan Hira, he resident at Palla Camp under Memari Police Station”⁴

Niranjan Mistry, the current treasurer of universal Hari Temple in Kanchan Nagar, said about the description of the temple, “In 1990, he came to Kanchan Nagar from Madbaria Thana of Barisal district first via Bongaon. Therefore, after coming to this country, I took initiative to participate in the promotion and spread of Matua religion in this region. With the combined efforts of many of us, the Universal Matua Mandir was established in Kanchan Nagar in 2010. We built this temple by pooling donations among ourselves. The work of the temple is not yet complete. In 2017, we, on behalf of the committee of this temple, applied to the secretary of Sara Bharat Matua Sangh for permission to open a branch of Sara Bharat Matua Sangh. We got that approval from Sukesh Chandra Chowdhury, the then General Secretary of Sara Bharat Matua Maha Sangh. Amulya Biswas and Shobha Biswas are entrusted to take care of this temple, they are husband and wife. As their remuneration, they were given rice donated every month by individuals associated with the temple. The annual religious program of this temple is held on Tritiya, five days after the event of Tagore Nagar. Our temple program is going on for three days. Apart from this area,

more than 30 Matua’s groups from different areas participate in the program. They are given food and travel expenses by the temple. Also, every year on the 10th day of the month of Paus, the foundation day of the temple, Janmashtami, first Wednesday of the month of Agrayon in Bengali Calendar, Novanna festival etc. are celebrated in this temple. Unity has been established among the Matua’s in our area around this temple.”⁵

The presence of this Hari Chand Thakur in the form of the devotional Tagore of the lower castes can be seen very deeply. Although they remembered another thakur with respect. In this context, Sasibala Kirtanya, a resident of Kanchan Nagar and a follower of Matua, commented. - “This Hari Chand Tagore is the savior of our low caste people - therefore he is our Thakur, and Thakur Sri Krishna is the Tagore of the upper caste people.”⁶ This statement makes it clear how this Hari Chand Tagore had won a place in the hearts of the low caste refugees or Matua’s. The role of Hari Chand Tagore as a man of respect, love and devotion of the lower community of the entire East Burdwan district is unique. The All-India Matua Maha Sangh branch of East Burdwan district has been working for the development of Matua society for a long time. Not only public Hari Mandir but many people in Burdwan district also established private temples in their own homes on their own initiative. In this context, it may be mentioned that there is a private Hari temple in the house of Haridas Kirtanya in Poddar Para of Kanchan Nagar. The temple houses the idols of Hari Chand Tagore and his wife Shanti Mata Devi. Apart from this, Sarjit Mandal, Gaurang Halder etc. have personally built temples in this area. Also, private Hari Mandirs exist in refugee located in Damodar. In this context, mention can be made of the temples built by various Gonsai Thakurs. Mahananda Gonsai built the Hari temple on his personal initiative at Gaitanpur Char Mana located in Damodar. Where Matua’s annual ceremony and many other events are celebrated with fanfare. At present the work of the temple is not yet completed. Another Gonsai Thakur of Burdwan district is Bhoben Pagal, resident of Jaugram, who built a private Hari temple. His annual event is celebrated 15 days after the main event at Thakur Nagar. Thousands of Matua fans attended this private event with their teams. The event was celebrated with great fanfare. The annual ceremony at Harsit Gonsai’s private temple at Pandua in the neighboring Hooghly district is celebrated with great pomp, attended by many devotees. Also, Hari Mandirs have been built privately in many areas including Palla, Nilpur, Maheshdanga, Jahapur Mana, Parijat Nagar, Katwar Refugee Colony, and Purvasthali Netaji Colony.

The All-India Matua Maha Sangh branch of Purba Bardhaman district has been working for the development of Matua society for a long time. This organization provides help to the distressed people helping in various ways. In this community those who need help in education, giving food to those who need food, giving clothes to those in need, helping those who need medical assistance are accepted as the main programs of this Matua Maha sangha. In a word it can be said that this association has been established to serve the people of this community. At present, Krishna Kant Biswas is the secretary of this Matua Maha sangha’s East Burdwan district. whose

home is in Memari area of East Burdwan district and the East Burdwan district president of this organization is Anand Biswas whose home is Parijat Nagar. Annual district conference is held every year in different areas of the district. In that conference, the people who handled the important responsibilities of organization throughout the year were elected as district president and secretary for the next year.

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